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Heroic Deeds Of Muslim Women

The most heroic action among the golden deeds of Europe is that of a gallant woman who did the part of a soldier in a battle against Napoleon Bonapart. In 1808, C.E., when Napoleon successfully finished off his expedition to Portugal and left his brother, Joseph, there as his vice-regent, he moved on to Spain. He met with determined opposition in Saragossa, the capital city of Aragon. Not only did Spain bring up all her available military forces to offer a desperate resistance, but an appeal was made to the national sentiment of the people as well. Help was solicited from each and every individual, and the people rushed forth to sacrifice their all for their motherland. Men and women alike risked their lives to save the honour of their hearth and home.

What more could women and children do? They volunteered to serve the wounded soldiers. Countess Beureta organised a group of women and children to take the soldiers' ration to the battlefield, and carry back the wounded from the field to nurse them. This historic fight is associated with a proud event of European history. Augustina Saragossa was one day carrying ration for a soldier when, on her way, she saw a dreadful scene. Just at that moment a bullet struck a soldier at his post, and he fell dead. The other soldiers sought to secure his vantage point but the deadly fire fell so thick that the soldiers dared not move to check the enemy's advance. Brave Augustina, however, courageously rushed to the place and ignited the cannon which the soldier, now lying dead, had pointed towards the approaching foe. With undaunted courage she worked till the end of the crisis.

When the battle was over, Augustina found that all she had done was on behalf of her husband who lay dead behind the cannon. The nation viewed this action of Augusitna with unstinted approval. The state awarded her a stipend for life, and the historians

have depicted this as one of the most glorious and honourable deeds in the annals of Europe.

Joan of Arc was another brave woman of Europe who, dressed in the male attire, fought in the siege of Orleans (1428 C.E.). She discomfited the English in the battle of Pietz, and seated Charles VII on the throne. In 1431 she was burnt alive, for it was put about that her supernatural prowess was due to sorcery. But she has been invested with a halo of glory and her great deeds are cited in history books as examples of supreme heroism. She was canonised in 1920, that is, acclaimed officially as a Saint (by the Roman Catholic Church).

The history of Islam also abounds in scores of such gallant actions on the part of Muslim women but, unfortunately, they are not commonly known. Prior to Islam, the Arab women used to accompany men to the battlefield. With their children, they remained behind the fighting lines and looked after the wounded soldiers, attended the horses, comforted their valiant husbands, roused their spirit by narrating the thrilling achievements of their

ancestors, disarmed the dead soldiers of the enemy, rallied the panic-stricken fugitives, and guarded the prisoners.

The famous poet of Arabia, 'Umar bin Kulthum, recites in pride:

على اثارنا بيض خسان تحاذر ان تقسم او تهونا
اخذن على بعو د عهدا اذا لا قوا كتا ئب معلمينا
لكي يسلبن افراسا و بيضا واسرى فى الجبال مقر نينا
ضعائن من بنى جشم بن بكر خلطن جسيم حسبا و دينا
يقتن جيادنا يقلن لستم بعو لتنا اذا لم تمنعونا

"Behind our ranks are beautiful and white-faced women; we are always afraid lest they should be insulted, and the enemy take possession of them. These women have taken oaths from their husbands to show gallantry in the field of battle. They accompany us, so that they may take possession of,and arrest, enemies' horses and armaments. These are the ladies of the family of Jashm bin Bakr, who not only possess beauty, but also have traditions both of family and religion. They look after our horses and they say, 'if you

cannot protect us from the enemy you are not our husbands'."

Islam also maintained this tradition. Women always followed men in the jihad. In the battle of Uhud, according to Bukhari, 'Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her) carried a leather bag full of water to quench the thirst of wounded soldiers. She was helped in the task by Umm Salim and another lady.

The traditionist Abu Nayeem relates that in the battle of Khaibar half a dozen women of Madinah followed the marching army. The Prophet did not know of this and, when he was informed, he angrily asked them why they had come at all. They reverently answered that they had medicines with them, that they would nurse and dress the wounded, take out arrows from the bodies of the soldiers, arrange for their rations. The prophet allowed them to accompany the army and, when Khaibar was conquered, he gave a share of the war booty to these women also.[1]

1. Abu Dawud, *Fath-e-Khaibar.*

In a number of battles, Umm Salim and a few other ladies of Ansar rendered similar services.[2] Rabi, daughter of Mu'az, along with other women, performed the duty of carrying the martyrs and the wounded from the battlefield of Uhud to Madinah.[3] Umm Raqida had a pavilion for the wounded where she washed and dressed their wounds.[4]

Umm Zaid, Ashjiya, and five other ladies helped the Muslims during the battle of Khaibar, by working at spinning wheels. They picked up arrows from the field, and offered grain flour (*sattu*) to the soldiers.[5] Umm 'Attiya cooked for the companions in seven battles.[6]

Tabari writes of one occasion when the corpses of Muslim soldiers lay in great number in the van. The group of men appointed for burying the martyrs commissioned women to look after the wounded. In the battles of Aghwath and Armath, fought in

2. *Abu Dawud*, Vol. I. p. 252.
3. *Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Tib*
4. *Abu Dawud*, Vol. I.p.270.
5. *Sahih Muslim*, Vol.II, p. 105 (Egypt.)
6. *Tabari*, Vol, VI,p.231, (European Edn.)

connexion with that of Qadisiya, women and children dug graves.[7]

The battle of Qadisiya is described thus by a woman who was present: "When the battle was over, we (women) rushed forward daringly to the battlefield with rods in our hands and picked up the wounded Muslim soldiers."[8]

The above incidents, however, not only testify to the religious zeal, national enthusiasm, and heroism of Muslim women, but also detail the various duties they were called upon to perform from time to time. They did not shirk the humble and unpleasant chores; the digging of graves and the procurement of rations for the army. Not only did the women nurse the wounded in the rear, they also brought in the casualties from the battlefield. Not content with urging men to take a firm stand, sometimes they actually helped them by joining in the battle. In short, no task was too difficult or too unpleasant for them to attempt.

7. *Tabari*, Vol. v, p.2363
8. Ibid

If you examine the battles of the early period of Islamic history, you will find women engaged in these duties in the rear. The last-mentioned services rendered by Muslim women, however, requrire, some elaboration, and we will go into detail to show how nobly the *weaker sex* among the Muslims discharged this task.

The mother of Anas b.Malik (the Prophet's servant), Umm Salim, usually accompanied the Prophet to the field.[9] When Taleeb bin 'Umair embraced Islam and informed his mother of this, she said, " You have sided with the man who deserved the most. Would that I had the strenght and the ability of man, I would protect him and fight for him."[10]

In the battle of Ditch, the Prophet and his Companions were fighting against the Jews, when Banu Quraiza advanced to the place where Muslim women and children had entrenched themselves. There were no soldiers to protect these women against Banu Quraiza. Meanwhile, a Jew chanced

9. *Usud-ul-Ghaba*, Vol. V, p. 591.
10. *Isti'ab Taleeb*, bin 'Umair.

to appear near them. It was feared that the Jew might betray them to Banu Quraiza who would then attack at the earliest opportunity. Safia, the aunt of the Prophet, and the mother of Zubair, asked Hassan bin Thabit to kill the Jew. Seeing his hesitation, Safia herself climbed down with a pole of the pavilion in her hands and killed the Jew with it. This was the first heroic action, says the historian Ibn Athir, done by a Muslim woman.[11]

Umm Ammarah was a notable lady Companion. Prior to the *Hijrat*, when the Muslims from Madinah had secretly taken a vow on the hands of Prophet to help him against the Quraish infidels and to propagate the cause of Islam, Umm Ammarah was one of the staunch adherents who formed an organised group for the first time. This is known as Bai'at-i-'Uqbah in Islamic history. In 6 A.H. when the Prophet decided to go to Makkah on pilgrimage, he sought permission from the Quraish to enter the city. Hazrat 'Uthman went as an envoy to Makkah on behalf of the Muslims. It was rumoured that he

11. *Usud-ul-Ghaba*, Description of Safia, Vol. V. p 591.

had been put to death by the Quraish. Furious at the news, the Companions took an oath on the hands of the Prophet to fight to death. This is known as Bai'at-i-Rizwan. Umm Ammarah also took the oath. Again, in the battle of Uhud, she accompanied her husband to the battlefield, and when disorder and flght had destroyed the chance of a Muslim victory and when the infidels were assailing the sacred person of the Prophet, and the faithful Companions were laying down their lives to save him, this heroic lady, sword in hand, was also trying to keep back the assailants. She sustained that day a number of injuries on her hands and arms. Her great courage and bravery were also demonstrated in other battles.[12]

During Hazrat Abu Bakr's caliphate, Musailama the Liar, professed to be an inspired prophet but he was killed by the Muslims in the bloody battle of Yamama. Here again Umm Ammarah fought till she was seriously wounded receiving twelve wounds on her body that day.[13]

12. *Usud-ul-Ghaba*, Vol. V, p.605
13. *Sayyad Dahlan*, *Futuhat-i-Islamia*, p.64.

During Hazrat 'Umar's days, Islam had to encounter two formidable foes, the Romans and the Persians, before it could make possible an expansion beyond the Arabian Peninsula. The fiercest battle, which finally decided the fate of the Roman Empire in the East, took place at Yarmuk. The Persians also fought at Qadisiya with all the might of the Chaldaean throne, but all in vain. These two battles were epoch-making in the history of Islam, for, after them, Islam expanded far and wide with little or no opposition.

These two victories owed much to the vigilance and prowess as well as to the fiery eloquence of Muslim women. On Muharram 14, the fighting forces of the Muslims and the Persians met at Qadisiya. The Persians numbered 100,000 while the Muslims only a little over 30,000. In this battle many thousands of Muslims were killed and wounded. Women and children dug graves and carried away the wounded from the battle ground and nursed them.

The intensity of enthusiasm on the part of

women at the battle of Qadisiya may be judged by the following remonstrances which an old lady of the Nakh'a tribe made to her sons, when sending them off to the battle:

> "Dear sons! you embraced Islam, and did not turn against it. You made *Hijrat*, but you were not reproached. Your motherland was not unsuitable to you, nor had famine befallen you. Now you have placed your old mother before the Persians. By Allah, you are the sons of one father, just as you are of one mother. I have never been dishonest to your father, nor unfair to your maternal uncle. Depart and fight heroically to the last." [14]

The sons attacked the enemy together and fought gallantly. When they disappeared out of her sight, the old mother raised her hands in prayer and implored Allah to save them. At the end of the battle the brave sons came back safe, and laid down their share of the booty of war before their mother.

The famous Arab poetess, Khansa, was also

14. *Tabari*, Vol. V, p.2307.

present at the battle of Qaidisiya with her four sons. In the early part of the night when the soldiers were anticipating the dreadful scene of the morrow, the poetess was encouraging her sons in the following words:

> Dear sons! you chose Islam of your own accord, and also performed *Hijrat*. By the Unity of Allah, you are the sons of one father, just as you are born of one mother. I have never been dishonest to your father, nor insulted your maternal uncle, nor disparaged your genealogy. Full well you know the glories attirbuted by Allah to one fighting against the infidels for the Muslims. Let me fully acquaint you that the everlasting world is better than this mortal one. Allah says: 'O Muslims! have patience, persevere, and fear Allah so that you may be successful'. When you rise the following morn, go and fight the enemies with all your experience, begging Allah for His help. And when you see that the battle is raging furiously and the terrible flame surrounds you

on all sides, plunge yourselves into the very furnace of the battle and when you see faces reddened with the fire of excitement, rush forward to the commander-in-chief of the hostile army. May Allah give you booty from the war in this world, and houour in heaven!'[15]

The following morning the battle commenced, and the four sons dashed foward to fight the enemy and in the end fell fighting gloriously. When Khansa learnt of their death, she thanked Allah for having honoured her with the martydom of her sons. Hazrat 'Umar sanctioned her a monthly stipend of 800 dinars, the salaries of her sons, as along as she lived.

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15. This speech and the speech quoted just above are similar in so far as the number of children and actual words are concerned, but there are differences. The first lady is of the tribe of Nakh'a but Khansa belongs to a Muslim tribe. The speech of the former is concise and simple, while that of the latter is long, eloquent and spirited, worthy of Khansa. *Tabari* writes that the sons of the former lady came back safe with the booty of the war. Ibn Athir says that the sons of the latter were martyred, and the Caliph 'Umar gave her the salaries of her sons as long as she lived, For the above speech, see *Usud-ul-Ghaba*. Vol. V, p.442.

After the battle of Hira, in which the Muslims were overpowered by the Persians, another frightful battle took place at Buwaib, perliminary to Qadisiya. The Muslims captured a very large amount of provision from the Persians. They had left the women at the place far behind the battleground where they cooked for the soldiers. Muthanna, the commander-in-chief, therefore, sent the provision to women under a small escort. As this contingent galloped toward the women, they thought that the enemy had rushed to make an onslaught on them. They had no arms and ammunition to resist with, but they put their children in the rear and prepared themselves to oppose the approaching foe with stones and tent poles. 'Amr b.'Abdul Masih, the commander of the contingent, exclaimed that the women of the Islamic forces were undoubtedly expected to be so bold and then announced the tiding of the Muslim victory and delivered to them the provision he had brought. [16]

The women exhibited still more wonderful

16. *Tabari*, Vol. IV, p.2197.

tactics in the battle of Maisan. The Muslims encountered the inhabitants of Maisan on the bank of the Tigris. Mughira, who was the commander of Muslim army, had left the women far behind. The two contesting armies were fighting frantically when Ardah, the daughter of Harith and the grand-daughter of Kaldah, the physician of Arabia, planned with her comrades to help the Muslims at this juncture. She made a long banner of her apron, and the rest of the women made similar banners of theirs. The two forces were fighting desprately when these women marched towards the Muslims army with their banners afloat in the air. The enemy thought it to be a fresh reinforcement of the Muslims and, thus discouraged, made an adrupt retreat.[17]

During the days of Hazrat Abu Bakr, the Muslims made the first raid on Damascus in 13 A.H. after a few skirmishes, the people of Damascus shut themselves up in the fortress which the Muslims besieged. The news came round that 90,000 Romans had gathered together in Ajnadain. The Muslims

17. *Ibid*, Vol. p. 2347.

forces lay scattered all over Syria. Abu 'Ubaida and Khalid bin Walid, who had returned to Damascus after sacking Iraq, decided to concentrate the entire Islamic forces in one place. These forces numbered 24,000 men. Accordingly, all the commanders marched their contingents to Ajnadain.

Abu 'Ubaida and Khalid, too, lifted the siege of Damascus and moved to Ajnadain. Khalid heralded the army and went ahead. Abu'Ubaida followed with a small force, escorting women, children, and baggage. The people of Damascus thought it a good opportunity to take their revenge by attacking the marching army from the rear. Simultaneously, a contingent, sent by the Emperor of Rome to aid the people of Damascus, attacked the front rank. The Muslims were completely surprised. It was a death-trap for them, but they showed coolness and courage and held the foe in check on both sides. But, while they were thus engaged with the army in front, the people of Damascus captured the Muslim women and hastened to the fortress with them.

The women looked at one another, when Khaula, the daughter of Azdar, spoke passionately:

> "Sisters!do you agree to surrender to the infidels of Damascus ? Will you disgrace the dignified shirts of the Arabian chivalry and glory? Let us die rather than submit to this disgrace."

These few words set the senses and pride of the Arabian women ablaze, and holding tent poles in their hands, they rose to stand firm. To live honourably or to die was the question. Khaula, the daughter of Azdar, was in the lead, and behind her were Afira, the daughter of Afara, Umm Aban, the daughter of 'Atba and Salmah, the daughter of Nu'man and others. The men of Damascus looked on amazed as the Muslim women killed thirty of them. They made desperate assaults in return, but failed to hold their ground. The Muslims had by this time routed the enemy in front and came to the help of their women. The army of Damascus could not stand against the Muslims and fled to the fortress, and the Muslim forces resumed their march to Ajnadain.

Gibbon has mentioned this event in his History, and, after appreciating the heroism, valour, high sense of virtue, and morality of Muslim women, writes that they enlisted in holy wars, wielded the bow and the lance, and in a moment of captivity defended their chastity and religion .[18]

The battle of Yarmuk was the first organised battle of the Muslims. They numbered only 40,000, but all were seasoned and scarred veterants of Arabia. The Romans were more than 2,00,000 in number and they gushed forth like a torrent as though they would sweep off the Muslim forces in a single stroke. The Christians outnumbered the Muslims by four to one, and their enthusiasm ran so high that 30,000 of them chained their feet together to make retreat impossible.

The cyclone of Roman forces burst forth in fury upon the Muslims who were badly shaken. The right wing of the Muslim forces fled pell-mell to the women's camp. The tribes of Lakmin and Juzam

18. Gibbon, *The History of Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* Chap. II, pp. 42-43.

had long remained under the tutelage of these Christians before they had embraced Islam. The left wing was mostly recruited from these people who, overawed and panic-striken by the approaching Romans, took to flight. When the pursuing Romans reached their camp, the fury of the women knew no bounds. They rushed out of the tents and offered solid resistance to the flood of the Roman onslaught. The Romans were repulsed, and the women hastened to the front lines and strove to hearten the Muslim army by their stirring eloquence. In this they were successful and the despairing Muslims composed themselves once again to conquer or to die. The women of the Quraish flung forward with swords flashing in the hands and rushed into the thick of the battle until they were ahead of their men. Juwairiya, the sister of Mu'awiyah, led a band of females and was wounded in the melee. Khaula, the sister of Darar b.Azdar, put the Muslims to shame by reading aloud the following line:

يا هاربا عن نسوة نقيات   رميت با لسهم و المنيات

"Oh you!the deserters of chaste women,

become the targets of arrow and death."

The historian Tabari makes a special reference to Umm Hakim, the daughter of Harith, in this battle.[19] Ibn Athir says that Asma, the daughter of Yazid, alone killed nine Roman soldiers.[20] Waqidi gives the names of some women who fought valiantly in the battle of Yarmuk: Asma, the daughter of Hazrat Abu Bakr, the wife of 'Abadah bin Samit, Khaula, the daughter of Tha'laba, Kaub, the daughter of Malik, Salmah, the daughter of Hashim, Naam, the daughter of Qanas, and Afira, the daughter of Afara.

After the battle of Yarmuk, the Muslim army was once again on the way to fight the Romans. It halted one day at Marj-us-Safar, near Damascus. Khalid bin Sa'eed had just married Umm Hakim, the daughter of Harith, and here he invited the Muslims to dinner. The tent of Umm Hakim was pitched near a bridge which is still called the bridge of Umm Hakim. Dinner was not yet finished when the Roman forces made their sudden appearance.

19. *Tabari*, Vol. V, p.2347.
20. *Usud-ul-Ghaba*, Vol. V, p.398.

The Muslims hastily prepared for the fight, and the Romans were desperately assailed and returned in disaster. Umm Hakim herself also fought heroically and killed seven Roman soldiers.[21]

In the battle of camel Hazrat'Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her)doubtlessly made a bona fide mistake in fighting against Hazrat 'Ali, still, however, it helps us to realise the courageous and chivalrous part a Muslim woman plays on occasions.

If we accept the authority of Waqidi, we shall have to admit that women played a major part in the conquest of Syira, especially Umm Hakim, Hind, Umm Katheer, Asma, Umm Aban, Umm Ammarah, Khaula, Lubna, and Afira rendered such meritorious services in the battle as could not be acquitted even by men. Atba bin Ghazwan was an Amir appointed by Hazrat 'Umar, and Azdah, the daughter of Harith and grand-daughter of Kaldah, the physician of Arabia, was his wife. 'Atba was once facing the tenacious opposition of the people of Madinat-ul-Farat, when his wife encouraged the combatants by her speeches.[22]

21. Ibid., Vol, p.577
22. Baladhuri, *Futuh-ul-Buldan*, p. 343 (Leydon).

During the invasion of Damascus, when Aban bin Sa'eed was martyred by Tuma, the governor of Damascus, his wife, Umm Aban, the daughter of Atba, set out with all the weapons of her martyred husband to take revenge. She fought heroically with the enemy for long. The people of Damascus, though beseiged in the fortress, retaliated from the ramparts of the fortress. At the head of them a holy man was praying for victory with the golden Cross in his hand. Umm Aban, being an expert archer, aimed accurately at the cross knocking it out of the man's hand. It flew with the arrow beyond the ramparts of the fortress and dropped in the midst of the Muslims. The Christians could not tolerate this and Tuma, with eyes aflame and lips frothing, rushed out of the fortress, and a battle, violent and impetuous, ensued. The Romans fought stubbornly to recover the Cross, but it was of little avail. Whoever turned towards it was a victim of Aban's fatal arrows. Tuma was adamant but even he retreated posthaste when Umm Aban's arrow plunged directly into one of his eyes. Umm Aban was reciting the following lines:

ام ابان فاظلبى بشارك
صولى عليهم صوله المتدارك
قد ضبع جمع القوم من نبالك

"Umm Aban! you take your revenge, and make an incessant invasion upon them; the Romans have been agonised by your arrows."

The most dreadful battle was fought in Yaum-ut-Tawir and here the Muslim women exhibited a wonderful example of bravery. The Muslims would have been badly beaten had not the women drawn swords and stood face to face against the Romans. Hind, Khaula, Umm Hakim, and many other women of the Quraish steeled themselves against panic and fought valantly. Asma, the daughter of Hazrat Abu Bakr, always fought side by side with her husband on horseback.[23]

In the battle of Siffin, a large number of

23. There are many other similar instances recorded in *Futuh-ush-Sham* on Waqidi's authority, but as they are not mentioned in *Futuh-ush-Sham* of Azid we pass them over.

Muslim women accompanied Hazrat 'Ali to the battlefield. They fought and cheered the tired soldiers by their spirited speeches. Zarqa, Akrasha, and Umm khair made such thrilling speeches that they kindled a fire of fervour and enthusiasm among all sections of the army.[24]

The Islamic conquests owed much to the valiant deeds of the tribe of Azd, noted for its prodigal heroism and valour. In 90 A.H. during the caliphate of Walid bin 'Abdul Malik, the Muslims, under the command of Qutaiba, made an expeditionary raid upon Bukhara. Here the people of the Azd tribe volunteered to make the first onslaught against the Turks, an enemy both brave and well prepared. Qutaiba permitted them and they rushed forward. They attacked the Turks courageously, but the latter were first-rate fighters. They held the Azds in check and, not long after, compelled them to retreat to their camps. The women saw the Muslims on the point of being broken. They rose to the occasion and beating the horses of the

24. *Iqd-ul-Farid*, Vol. I, pp. 121-124.

soldiers drove them back to the fightingfield. In the resulting tumult, the Muslims took courage, stood firm, and, with renewed strength, attacked the Turks successfully. The women did not draw the sword on this occasion, but the rout was checked mainly because of them. But for these women, the Muslims would have fled the field.[25]

The Kharijites are much noted in Islamic history. Unlike some other sections of the Muslims, they did not indulge in any underhand conspiracies but raised the banner of revolt openly against the authorities of the State. In seeking freedom of action, liberty of speech, equality, and fraternity, they were always repressed by the sword; nevertheless, they have kept themselves alive by their patience, perseverance, and valour. Their views on state-craft were like those held by the modren Nihilists.

In 77 A.H, when 'Abdul Malik was the caliph of Syria, and Hajjaj was the Governor of Iraq, Shabib, a Kharijite, rose in Mosul against authority. Ghazala and Jahaiza, the wife and mother of Shabib,

25. Ibn Athir, *Kamil*, Vol. IV, p.207

respectively, always accompanied him in battle. Hajjaj sent five chiefs successively to quell Shabib, but not one of them came back from the field. At last 'Abdul Malik sent troops from Syria under the personal command of Hajjaj.

Shabib left Mosul for Kufa, but Hajjaj had outdistanced him by reaching Kufa earlier and occupying Qasr-ul-Amarah. Ghazala had taken a solemn vow to observe two Rak'ats of prayers in the Jami' Masijd of Kufa. Although the Syrian troops lay encamped in the hostile city, she came to the mosque along with her husband, accompanied by only seventy men. Shabib stood guarding the door of the mosque sword in hand, and Ghazala prayed composedly inside. It was not a haphazard observance, for she recited Surah Baqar (The Cow) in her first Rak'at and Surah Al-i-'Imran (The Family of 'Imran) in the second, the two longest chapters of the Holy Qur'an. After she had finished her prayer, Ghazala went back to her camp, much to the bewilderment of the forces of Hajjaj. When fighting began, Hajjaj advanced impetuously with

the forces of Kufa, Basra, and Syria. Shabib had an insignificant number of followers, but they fought gallantly. Hajjaj stood in the rear and harangued his soldiers who outmanoeuvred the Kharijites and occupied their mosque. Ghazala and Jahaiza also took active part in the fight. Hajjaj despatched clandestinely a few soldiers who caught Ghazala unwares and killed her instantly. Shabib escaped to Ahwaz. Ibn Khalikan says that Jahaiza was also killed in the battle. Ibn Athir and Tabari write that a few days later Shabib's horse fell from a bridge into the Tigris and he was drowend because of the weight of his heavy armour. Someone conveyed the news to his mother that he had been killed. It was impossible, rejoined his mother, that Shabib could be killed. She was told the next day that he died because he was drowned. This she believed. By this account we can not only appreciate her exquisite sense of chivalry, but we are also given evidence that she was still living at this time.

In some battles Hajjaj and Ghazala stood face to face, but the former failed to make a stand against

her and retired timidly, it was though the very Hajjaj who ruled Iraq and Hejaz with blood and iron. A poet says.[26]

> "Hajjaj is bold like a lion upon me, but he is coward in battle;he becomes a coward like a lazy ostrich. Hajjaj!why did you not sally forth against Ghazala? How can you do this, your heart was palpitating?"

In 139 A.H., during the caliphate of Mansur, the Roman Emperor brought utter destruction upon Maltia by invading it. Mansur sent troops to chastise the Emperor. Salih bin'Ali and 'Abbas bin Muhammad were in command of the army. They colonised Maltia afresh and then turned to Constantinople and occupied a number of imperial cities. Umm 'Isa and Lubaba, daughters of 'Ali, sister of Salih, and Caliph Mansur's aunts, had vowed to go on *Jihad* when the Umayyads would be destroyed outright. Accordingly they, too, had joined this holy war in Constantinople."[27]

26. Ibn Khallikan, Vol. I, p.223.
27. Ibn Athir, *Kamil*, Vol. V, p.182

In 178 A.H., during Harun-ar-Rashid's rule, Walid b.Tareef, a Kharijite, raised the banner of revolt in Khabur and Nasibain. A renowned chief of the court, Yazid Shaibani, was sent to quash the rebellion. The Kharijites were defeated and Walid was killed. When Walid's sister, Fara, learnt of her brother's death, she donned the armour, seized her weapons, and rode to make an attack upon the caliphal troops. Yazid himself came to oppose her and struck down her horse. He advised her to go home, which she did. Her eyes overflowed with tears as she read these pathetic lines composed by herself:

فيا شجرا الخاور مالك مورقا — كانك لم تجزع على ان ظريف

فتي لا يحب الزاد الا من التقى — ولا المال الا من قنا و سيوف

فقد ناك فقدان الشاب وليتنا — فدينا ك من فتياتنا بالوف

عليه سلام الله وقتا فانني — ارى الموت وقاعا بكل شريف

"Oh, the tree of Khabur, why are you green? Are you not restless on Walid's death? Walid was a young man who loved the wealth of piety, sword, and arrows. Oh Walid!we have lost you, just

as someone loses his youth. Oh, could we
sacrifice thousands of youths on your
single person! May Allah bless Walid!
Death is to come one day to every gentle
soul!"

This elegy is full of pathos, and is reckoned of a very high standad by learned scholars. Abu'Ali Yali has quoted this in his *Amali*. Ibn Khallikan says that the elegies of Fara were equal in standad to Khansa's.

She is named Fara and Fatima by Ibn Khallikan, but Ibn Athir names her Laili. Ibn Khaldun has mentioned this event but he does not give us any name.

The frenzy of the Crusades had not only overtaken the male population of Europe, but the egregious fervour infected the Christian women as well. According to Ahmad Katib, scores of Christian women always remained present in the field. The Muslim women also did not remain unaffected by the hardships and exploits of the Muslim soldiers. When Usama, a Muslim Amir, went on to a Crusade,

his mother and sister accompanied him, and clad in arms, they helped Usama in his fight against the Christians.[28]

The religious zeal of the Muslim mothers did not fail to produce its desired effect upon their children. The Christians were exhausted as a result of the long seige of Accre, and they had grown friendly with the Muslim soldiers. Once they proposed a fight between their children and those of the Muslims. Children rushed forward from both sides and fought with one another. The little cubs of the Muslims encircled the Christian lambs and bound them tightly in ropes.[29]

India is generally not mentioned when one narrates the historical glories of Islam. But we propose to take India also within our purview. In the Islamic history of India, we find a large number of Muslim women noted chiefly for their high sense of chivalry, heroism, and courage..

28. *Huqud-ul-Marat-wal-Islam*, by Ahmad bek Ajayaf; the Russian.

29. *Al-Fath-ul-Qudsi fi al-Fath-ul-Qudsi.*

Raziya Sultana, the daughter of King Iltutmish, ruled for a short period of time, but in a way better than any other Muslim queen. Ibn Batuta, who came to India in Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, writes: "Raziya rode out in male attire and clad in arms." The Kings of India used to take their ladies with them on their hunting expeditions. Once Iltutmish went to hunt lions, and the ladies of his palace followed at a distance. A lion came all of a sudden out of his den and leapt furiously upon the king. Raziya hastened to the spot, and with her sabre inflicted masterly strokes on the lion which fell half-dead to the ground.

When she succeeded to the throne, she ruled with stern and enviable authority. The nobles grew powerless and their selfish ambitions found no place in the realm. Nizam-ul-Mulk, the vizier of the State, Malik Izzuddin, Malik Saifuddin, Malik 'Alauddin and others who were for long the adherents of the State rose in rebellion, besieged Delhi and won over the armies coming to Raziya's help. But Raziya defended herself alone, and dissolved the besieging

concourse with great military finesse. In 637 A.H. She herself led the army against the rebellious governor of Lahore. She next summoned the army when the governor of Bhatinda rose in revolt, but she was arrested on her way through the treachery of some of her servants, and her brother Mu'izzuddin was porclaimed King. After her release from the prison, she organised her troops afresh and fought for the throne of Delhi thrice, but, her army being quite new and untrained she always suffered defeat.[30]

In this connexion we come across a strange incident in 'Alauddin Khilji"s reign which enhances the historical glories of the Muslim rule in India. 'Alauddin, a man of undaunted courage, lofty ambitions, and imperious authority, is an extraordinary figure in the annals of Muslim history. When he successfully withstood the savage raids of the Tartar hordes, which the invulnerable fortresses of Khwarizm and Baghdad, the high walls of China and the adamantine forces of Russia and Iran had failed to check, he, like Alexander the great, began

30. *Tabqat-i-Nasiri,* pp. 185-190; *Tabqat-i-Akbari,* Vol. I, pp. 65-67.

to dream of worldwide conquests. One day he said in his court that there was left no kingdom in India which could dare oppose him. The Raja of the fortress of Jalaor, Kaner Deo, was present in the court. He retorted haughtily that Jalaor did not acknowledge his authority.

The Sultan felt the contempt but kept silent on the occasion. After three days he sent the Raja away from Delhi and gave him leave to make preparation with all his resources to resist his invasion. Three months later, the Sultan sent his female slave Gul Behisht (Flower of Paradise) in command of an army to Jalaor. Gul Behisht reached Jalaor very swiftly. The Raja could not oppose her in the open field and closed himself within the fortress. Gul Behisht besieged the Raja and conducted the skirmishes to the great bewilderment of her opponents. The fortress was on the point of surrender when Gul Behisht fell seriously ill, and the cruel hand of death cut short her career.

After her death the Raja came out of the fortress and beat back the imperial army. Gul

Behisht's son, Shahim, was killed by the Raja, but a new commander-in-chief, Kamaluddin, came and conquered Jalaor.[31]

At the end of the seventh century and beginning of the eighth, a great upheaval took place in the world. Amir Timur rose like a cyclone from Turkistan and enfeebled the powerful kingdom of the Turks, shook the foundations of Damascus and Arabia, and put out the twinkling light of the Tughlaqs. Timur's conquest of India bore fruit one hundred and twenty-five years later in the shape of the glorious rule of the Mughals which commenced with Zahiruddin Shah Babur.

Did women contribute nothing to these conquests? The world-conquering forces of Timur comprised a number of women who fought in battles, sallied forrth in battle-dress, stood firm against valiant enemies, wielded swords manfully, discharged arrows skilfully, and did not in any way lag behind men.

Once, Jahangir, while hunting, missed a

31. *Tarikh-i-Farishta,* Vol. I, p. 118 (Nawal-Kishore Press).

number of shots from the *howdah* of his elephant. Nur Jahan, however, shot the lion dead point blank.[32] On another occasion again Nur Jahan accompanied him on a hunting excursion. She was mounted on an elephant. Four lions made a sudden appearance but Nur Jahan was not in the least perturbed. She fired her gun rapidly but calmly and shot dead two lions each with one bullet and the other two with two each. Jahangir was highly pleased with her and rewarded her with valuable ornaments. A poet wittily said: نور جہاں گرچہ خوبصورت است

در صف مردان ، زن شیر افگن ، است

(Nur Jahan was formerly the wife of 'Ali Quli Khan Sher Afghan. "*Zan-i-Sher Afghan.*" "Zan" means both *wife* and woman and has beautified the line.)

During Jahangir's last days, Asaf Khan was partly responsible for the rancour which Jahangir and Nur Jahan bore towards Mahabat Khan. Asaf Khan favoured the Timuride princesses. If we

32. *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri* p. 279.

examine details in *Babur Namah, Humayun Namah, Tuzk-i-Jahangiri*, we shall find the Timuride women wearing arms, riding horses, going on hunting excursions, killing lions, playing polo, and practising with bows and arrows. They learnt all the technicalities of soldiering and we learn from the *Tuzk-i-Baburi* that Babur's conquests of Kabul, Samarqand, and Farghana owed much to women.

Nur Jahan did not genealogically come of Timur and Babur. She was nevertheless their daughter-in-law. She would mount an elephant, go a-hunting to the forest and shoot lions with steady hands. Jahangir gives an elegant description in his *Tuzk* of Nur Jahan's hunting exploits. He writes that once he was accompanied by Rustam Khan and Nur Jahan on a hunting expedition when a lion came out of a bush. The elephant smelt the lion and trembled with fear. With a frightened elephant it is difficult to shoot steadily from the *howdah*. Rustam Khan was unrivalled in shooting and so, he shot the lion to bring disgrace and discredit to Mahabat Khan. Jahangir was encamped near the river Bhatt. Asaf

Khan had sent all soldiers, domestics, and arms across the river. Jahangir, his family, and few servants and eunuchs remained behind to cross next morning. Mahabat Khan designed a coup and seized the Emperor's person. But the audacious general was chagrined to miss Nur Jahan, who escaped across the river. She upbraided her nobles and generals. All this, she reproached them, had happened through their negligence and mismanagement. It was then unanimously resolved that next morning the whole army should be drawn up in battle array, cross the river, and deliver an attack on Mahabat Khan.

The next morning all the forces were ready. Mahabat Khan had already set fire to the bridge but the dashing soldiers plunged their horses and elephants into the river. Nur Jahan also mounted an elephant and had, beside her, a sister of Prince Shahryar and daughter of Shah Nawaz Khan. The imperial forces had not yet crossed the river when Mahabat Khan launched an attack. Nur Jahan's army was scattered into numerous isolated, confused groups, and all order and discipline was washed

away in the river. Nur Jahan asked Khwaja Abdul Hasan and Mo'tamad Khan not to delay but to stride boldly forward. Nur Jahan herself was not immune from attack. Some soldiers of Mahabat Khan surrounded her elephant and showers of arrows began to fall on her right and left, and one sturck the arm of Shahryar's daughter. Nur Jahan's clothes were steeped in blood but she pulled out the arrow and threw it aside. The eunuchs of Nur Jahan were killed, and her elephant received sword cuts on the trunk and spear wounds on the hind part of its body. The elephant took to flight and, with great difficulty, swam across to the bank. But it was on account of her maimed and frightened elephant that Nur Jahan failed to put up a brisk fight on the occasion.[33]

Mirza Hadi has related a wonderful deed of a woman at the end of the *Tuzk-i-Jahangiri*, although he has made some scandalous refernces to her morality.

In Jahangir's reign, the fortress of Daulatabad was under Nizam-ul-Mulk. Hamid Khan, a Negro

33. Ibid, Vol. 404-405.

was the court consul of Nizam-ul-Mulk, and inside the palace Hamid Khan's wife Hamida Begum had assumed the supreme say. She was an ordinary woman, but she gradually gained power even in Nizam-ul-Mulk's court. When she rode out, the nobles and military commanders walked beside her horse on foot. Nizam-ul-Mulk was a tool in the hands of this couple. During this time 'Adil Khan sent a huge army against Nizam-ul-Mulk who had no worthy man to send in opposition. Hamida Begum offered her services saying that if she did win, it would, be glory for her, and if she was vanquished, it would be a matter of little or no consideration for a woman. Nizam-ul-Mulk cosented, and Hamida Begum marched with the forces. She pleased the soldiers with her generosity and when the fighting armies clashed, she stood like an adamantine rock in the battlefield. Thus inspired by her presence, the soldiers fought gallantly and not long after 'Adil Shah's troops fled in confusion and disorder, leaving behind their artillery. Mirza Hadi Writes:

"She put on a veil over her pretty form,

and fastened ornamented sword and dagger round her waist. And when the two forces arrayed in opposition, she gave a bold, gallant, and courageous fight to 'Adil Shah's forces and encouraged her soldiers to kill, fight, and strike boldly, and promised bounties for them. She herself stood manfully like an impenetrable mountain during the fight and completely discomfited the assailants. She took possession of their elephants and guns and returned gloriously."

The following is another heroic deed of a Muslim woman.

Ponchi Khatun was the wife of the first king of 'Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur. Yusuf'Ali Shah died in 916 A.H. and his son, a minor, was crowned as king. Kamal Khan of the Deccan was nominated the vicegerent, who resolved to remove the nominal king and gain all the supreme power for himself.

When Ponchi Khatun become aware of this

projected plan of Kamal Khan, she made a counter-move to set him aside, but she failed to do anything, for all the nobles of the court and officers of the army were under the direct control of the vicegerent. Ponchi Khatun contrived either to do away with Kamal Khan or to be done away with herself along with the 'Adil Shahi dynasty. She sent Yusuf, a Turk, who was Isma'il 'Adil Shah's foster-brother, in secret, to Kamal Khan. Yusuf plunged a dagger into Kamal Khan's. Heart, but he was himself caught and killed. Kamal Khan's mother maintained a virtual secrecy and sent for his son, Safdar Khan. Safdar Khan was shocked at the brutal secrecy and sent for his grandmother who exhorted him to keep quiet and not to announce the death, rather to plan for the murder of Ponchi Khatun and Isma'il 'Adil Shah. She asked him to make a proclamation to the army that Kamal Khan wanted Isma'il Khan's head. Ponchi Khatun had perceived this coming danger. The fortress was occupied by Kamal Khan's 300 Mughals and 300 Deccanese and Negro soldiers. Collecting these soldiers Ponchi Khatun addressed them:

"You know that this throne rightly belongs to the `Adil Shahis. Isma'il is a child, and Kamal Khan wants to usurp his power. Those men who want to be true and faithful to the `Adil Shahi dynasty may remain in the fortress with us to fight to the last, and those who hold their lives dear may go out of the fortress. You must not be afraid of the number of the enemy. Kamal Khan must be punished by providence for his infidelity and ingratitude."

Very few were expected to side with Ponchi Khatun in this hopeless situtaion against Kamal Khan. Two hundred and fifty soldiers out of 300 Mughals and only seventeen out of so many Negroes and Deccanese offered to assist Ponchi Khatun, and the rest joined Safder Khan. This was a judicious step vouchsafed by Ponchi Khatun. If the faithless had played the traitor in the midst of the battle all would have been lost.

Ponchi Khatun closed the doors of the fortress

tightly, and then arrayed her small contingent of soldiers on the ramparts; she herself, Dilshad Agha, the sister of Yusuf' Adil Shah, and few other women along with Isma'il Adil Shah stood on the roof with bows and arrows in their hands. Safdar Khan advanced to the fortress with a large force, while Ponchi Khatun, Dilshad Agha, and other soldiers assailed with stones and arrows. By this time, Mustafa Aqa, an old adherent of the 'Adil Shahi Dynasty, came to the help of Ponchi Khatun with fifty gunners, who assaulted the attacking army with heavy bombardment. Safdar Khan retreated and planned to dismantle the fortress by bombardment. This meant sure ruin to the 'Adil Shahi adherents, and so Ponchi Khatun and other women planned to avoid it. It was contrived that the soldiers should resort to ambuscade and the women stand still on the battlement. It would mislead the opponents into thinking that the soldiers had deserted, leaving the helpless women alone behind. And indeed they did succeed in deceiving the enemy. Finding the women alone, they made a fearful attack once more and broke open the door of the fortress. The women kept

quiet, and Safdar wanted to break another door open when the hidden soldiers rushed forward. The enemy had to retire pellmell.[34] It was certainly no ordinary feat to oppose the contingents of an army with two or three hundred men.

The Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmadnagar, which ruled successfully for about one and a quarter century, is prominently noted for a princes who resisted the army of Akbar the Great with wonderful heroism and valour. Chand Khatun was related both to the Nizam Shahi' dynasty as well as to the 'Adil Shahi's. Husain Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar was her father, and Ali 'Adil Shah of Bijapur was her husband. After 'Adil Shah's death, she lived with her father in Ahmadnagar.

When Akbar finished his conquests in Hindustan, he thought to subdue the Deccan. Murad and Khan Khanan were accordingly sent on the expedition. Burhan Nizam Shah then ruled in Ahmadnagar. He resolved to offer the province of Berar to Akbar, but before it could be done he died.

34. *Tarikh-i-Farishta,* Vol. II, pp. 16,17.

Akbar could not occupy Berar. Prince Murad and Khan Khanan lay encamped in Gujrat waiting for an opportunity to raid Ahmadnagar. It came at last. Burhan Shah's successor, Ibrahim Shah, was killed by the nobles and the fight for succession ensued among Manjhu Khan, the court-consul, Ahang Khan, and Ikhlas Khan. Each of them proclanimed an individual King of his own. The gulf of differences remained unbridged and wanton bloodshed took place. Annoyed at this, Manjhu Khan wrote to Prince Murad requesting him to make an invasion upon the Nizam Shahi Kingdom, and promising at the same time to surrender the fortress of Ahamadnagar to him. Murad set out at once. Khan Khanan also hastened his march along with Shah Rukh of Badakhshan, Shahabaz Khan, Raja Jagannath, Raja Durga, Raja Ram Chandra, and other nobles. When they reached the vicinity of Ahmadnagar, Manjhu Khan repented on his hasty and foolish move, inasmuch as, in the meanwhile, he had suppressed all the hostile camps and was himself in supreme power. He had however, to surrender the fortress.

Chand Khatun, seeing that her ancestral kingdom would end in disaster, made a solemn determination to save it. She removed some of the hostile nobles from the fortress, made compromise with others, sought help from Qutub Shah of Bijapur and, strengthening her fortress from all sides, awaited the approach of Murad and Khan Khanan. Prince Murad advanced his troops towards the fortress on 23 Rabi II 1004. Chand Khatun stemmed the tide by heavy discharge of her cannons. In vain did Murad make strenuous efforts, all day long, to reach the fortress. Chand Khatun held him in stubborn check, and Murad, discouraged and exhausted, had to retire in the evening. The following day prince Murad, Shah Rukh Mirza, Khan Khanan, Shahbaz Khan, and Raja Jagannath made an embankment and besieged the fortress on all sides. Yet for months in this futile siege the fortress remained invulnerable.

Meanwhile, 'Adil Shah sent 25,000 cavalry to Chand Khatun's help and Qutub Shah also sent about 6000 cavalry and infantry. Manjhu Khan, Ikhlas

Khan, and Ahang Khan, and the Nizam Shahi nobles joined these troops, and a powerful army thus became available to Chand Khatun. Prince Murad was very much disquieted by the fresh reinforcements to Chand Khatun. However, although his troops were overawed, he decided to subdue the fortress at all costs before the reinforcements arrived. Since it was not possible to gain entrance to the fortress by fighting, five underground mines, leading to the parapet, were dug in three months, and, by setting fire to them, a bed of gun-powder concealed on the surface was expected to blow up the fortress.

Chand Khatun came to know of the Prince's plan. She attempted to fill up the mines and draw out the powder from them. Murad wished to own the glory of conquest for himself alone. Leaving Khan Khanan in the dark he hastened with all his army to the front of the mine. By this time, Chand Khatun had filled up two mines and had just begun the third when the Prince gave the order to apply the fuse. A thunderous roar burst forth as if the sky had tumbled down. A portion of the wall of the

fortress, fifty yards wide, gave way and the prince stood in front with dreadful array of his Mughal and Rajput soldiers. Chaos and confusion followed in the fortress;the people lost heart, volunteers retired, the heads of the army took to flight, and everything seemed lost.

But Chand Khatun, mounted on horse-back, clad in arms, and with a sword in her hand, came out of her apartment. To make an entrance into the fortress, the Prince awaited the explosion of the other two mines, alreaday countermined by Chand Khatun Once again, she lodged scores of cannons on the corners, put heart into her troops, and enccouraged them to make a bold stand. The Mughals and Rajputs advanced boldly but failed to gain a single inch of the fortress. Chand Khatun fought gallantly with her soldiers and the ditches outside were filled with the dead bodies of the Mughal ana Rajput soldiers. The Prince retreated ingloriously in the evening. During the night, Chand Khatun vigilanty re-erected the dismantled wall of the fortress. The following morning the Prince was surprised to see the same wall standing against him. Chand Khatun met with

a chorus of applause both from her friends and foes for her vigilance and enterprise. Thenceforth, she was called Chand Sultanah.

Prince Murad was, thus, deprived of victory. The nobles of Akbar lost heart, and sought compromise with the Khatun. Chand Sultanah first refused it for the enemies had already lost ground and a little more endeavour could bring utter destruction on them. But her own people were tired of closing themselves within the fortress, and so Chand Khatun assented to make peace. As arranged formerly, Berar was ceded to Prince Murad.[35]

Can a woman exhibit more bravery than this? The foundation of the kingdom tottered, nobles divided by internecine sturggle. The fortress lacking men and materials, the walls of the fortress dismantled, no adequate resources available for its defence; still the heroic Chand Sultanah defends the fortress gloriously against the formidable troops of Akbar the Great. It was certainly an exhibition of exquisite heroism and chivalry.

35. *Tarikh Rashiduddin Khani*, p. 199

We return once more to that sacred part of the earth where we began our discourse; we mean Yemen. In the middle of the fifth century A.H., Yemen had already passed from the sway of the Abbasids and was under the control of the Fatimids of Egypt. It happened thus. In Hazar, situated in Yemen, there lived the old dynasty of the Qadi Al-i-Salih. A protagonist of the Fatimids named Ziyad reached there and converted a young man, 'Ali bin Muhammad Salihi, into an Ismaelite. 'Ali grew up into an ambitious, magnanimous, and adventurous youth. He married his cousin Asma, who was unrivalled in her beauty, wit, wisdom, learning, geniuses, in a sacred tie, which glorifield the destiny of Yemen. Yemen was brought under their suzerainty by their bold enterprise and sound wisdom.

Asma always accompanied her husband in the battles he fought against his enemies. Once she was going to Makkah with her husband when the enemy made a sudden attack upon them. Her attendants were overpowered, and she was captured. She

remained in prison for a long time, but, at last, by a clever ruse, she suceeded in escaping. Through one of the messengers, who came to her in the guise of a mendicant, she sent a letter, hidden in loaves of bread, to her son, who came with a formidable army and forced her release from the prison. As long as Asma lived she ruled as the sovereign of Yemen. She died in 407 A.H.

Asma reared up two more chivalric women under her influence: her daughter-in-law, Syeda Fatima and her daughter-in-law, Syeda. Fatima secured boldly her freedom from her husband who had married another woman. She sent a letter secretly to her mother asking for troops to her aid, and when the aid reached her, she left the place incognito dressed as a man.

Syeda succeeded her mother-in-law as the Queen of Yemen. Her husband, Mukarram, was a man of loose character and indulged in debauchery. She ruled the realm excellently well, built magnificient buildings, settled towns, led expeditionary raids, and subdued enemies using both

sword and diplomacy. She was addressed by respectful titles in letters she recevied from the Fatimid rulers.[36]

We have still to turn over the pages of the history of scores of other Islamic kingdoms and hundreds of royal Muslim dynasties, but we do not propose to take the history of Iran, Turkistan, Africa, Morocco, and Spain in this brief survey, although these places abound in chivalric Muslim women. We cannot help mentioning here a few instances of the moral courage of Muslim women which occupies a higher place than physical boldness.

In the early days of Islam, numerous women bore tremendous hardships for their faith and religion but they did not divert from the truth. Summiyya was the mother of the illustrious Companion 'Ammar bin Yasir. She was sturck to death with a spear by Abu Jahl, because she had embraced Islam.

Umm Fakih was a lady Companion. Hazrat 'Umar, before his conversion to Islam, beat her mercilessly till he was tired. "I have stopped beating

36. Vide *Tarikh Umara-i-Yemeni,* India Office, London.

you," Said he, "not because I feel mercy for you, but because I am tired." "Umar," she answered patiently, "If you remain unconverted to Islam, Allah will punish you for this mercilessness on your part." Zanira was another lady Companion who was maltreated for her adherence to Islam. Abu Jahl beat her till she lost her sight. Nahdiya and Umm Abis, two other lady Companions, also suffered hardship without flinching from their conviction to Islam.[37]

Abdullah bin Zubair founded a rival caliphate in opposition to the Umayyads in Hejaz. Hajjaj attacked him with a powerful army. All but a few of 'Abdullah's followers began to desert him. 'Abdullah was disheartened and he went to his mother to ask permission for making a compromise with Hajjaj. "My child," said the chivalrous mother, "if you are in the wrong, you would better have made compromises long ago, but if you are in the right, you should not be discouraged by the scanty number of your followers. To fight for the right is itself a triumph."

37. These facts can be corroborated from any standard biography of the Prophet.

Ibn Zubair, clad in chain-armour, came to bid farewell to his mother, who clasped him to her breast. Feeling something hard and stiff around his body, she asked him what it was 'Abdullah said, he was wearing double armour. "This is not," remarked the mother, "how the martyrs of Allah have done." Ibn Zubair put off the armour but said he feared that his corpse might be cut into pieces. "Child", replied the mother, "when a goat is slaughtered, she feels little pain when her skin is flayed." Thus the mother sent her son to be sacrificed at the altar of truth and righteousness.

After Ibn Zubair was martyred, Hajjaj hanged his corpse at the roadside. A few days later, Asma passed that way and saw the corpse of her son hanging. She was naturally expected to be discomfited by the ghastly spectacle, but she kept quiet and passed casually. "Has the rider," said she meaningfully, pointing to the corpse, "not got down from his horse?"[38]

38. See *Tarikh Ya'qubi*, Vol. II, p.820 for details.

Where will you get such instances of chivalry, moral courage, and patience?

Before we leave our readers, we will take them to the scene when the last Sultan of Granada, Abu 'Abdullah, handed over the keys of his fortress to the Christian conqueror. He gazed back upon the country which the Muslims had ruled for six hundred years. Tears overflowed his eyes. The sultan's mother who stood beside him reproached him: "You may well weep like a woman for what you could not defend like a man."[39] This single sentence speaks volumes of chivalry and courage.

This has been but a hurried glance on the deeds of Muslim women of the past. Let us see what the present Muslim women leave behind for the annals of Islamic history!

39. *Lane-Poole*, (*History of the Moores in Spain.*) p. 276.

This famous work by the respected Muslim Scholar Allama Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, gives a brief account of heroic deeds of a few Muslim women who have, by their outstanding acts of valour courage and bravery carved for themselves a prominent place in Islamic history. An extremely informative book.

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